



# Health and Physical Development

- Self-Care
- Safety Awareness
- Motor Skills
- Physical Health and Growth

*“Since researchers are becoming increasingly concerned about the low level of fitness in all children ... it is imperative that early childhood programs offer a regular movement program. I have found that young children are fascinated with their bodies. They enjoy activities that explore the use of muscles (including the heart) and the different ways we can make our bodies strong and healthy (e.g., stretching, jogging, climbing, skating, swimming, and dancing). Providing lots of opportunity for locomotor activity on a regular basis contributes to children’s fitness level.”*

**Gisela Loeffler**

The domain of Health and Physical Development encompasses opportunities for children to begin developing and refining motor skills, self-care, physical health and growth, and safety awareness. These opportunities are provided in safe and accessible environments that respect cultural and individual differences.

During the preschool years, children begin to practice new motor skills such as balance, coordination, strength, and the ability to grasp writing tools. They also begin demonstrating self-help skills such as dressing themselves.

Children 3 to 5 years old need to be able to see and hear well; vision and hearing problems must be corrected to the greatest extent possible and adaptations made as needed. Likewise, children should have healthy teeth or have their dental problems treated. They need to have immunizations on schedule to prevent diseases, and they need to be assured that any health problems are detected and treated as early as possible. Children also need proper nutrition and rest, in order to have the energy and mobility to explore their environment and increase their ability to concentrate. In addition, early identification and intervention are critical for children with disabilities.

## Well-Being: Getting in the Game

*The children were enjoying their daily outdoor play period. Jordan and Sarah put on helmets and headed for the tricycles in the bike area. Latasha, Ashley, and Devon worked on puzzles at the picnic table. Patrick and Melia painted on the sidewalk with water. In the designated open area, a small group of children and a parent volunteer bounced a large playground ball. Molly, a child with a visual impairment, sat alone nearby, and her teacher joined her. While they were talking, the ball bounced over to them. “Your mom tells me you really like to play ball at home,” the teacher said. “Would you like to play today?” She flicked a switch on the ball that made it beep. Molly replied with a smile, “Yeah, I do want to play!” Taking hold of the girl’s hand, the teacher stood up and said, “Let’s go!”*

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## Self-Care

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*Self-care refers to the development and use of eating, dressing, and hygiene skills, and other indications such as taking responsibility for possessions.*

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### Widely Held Expectations

#### Children begin to:

- Develop an awareness of hygiene.
  - Follow basic hygiene practices (e.g., brushing teeth, washing hands).
  - Increase independence with basic self-help skills (e.g., feeding oneself, toileting, dressing oneself).
  - Develop the ability to care for personal belongings.
  - Help with routine care of the environment (e.g., put toys away).
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### Strategies for Families

- Demonstrate and talk with your child about hygienic practices such as hand-washing, bathing, and proper dental care.
  - Provide opportunities for your child to practice self-care skills as independently as possible, honoring your own cultural framework. Examples include asking for help when appropriate, feeding oneself, dressing, washing hands, toileting, and locating personal items.
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### Strategies for Early Educators

- Teach and model hygienic practices (e.g., washing hands, covering mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing, and dental care).
  - Use interesting and entertaining ways to practice personal care and self-help skills (e.g., add baby doll outfits and clothing with fasteners to the dramatic play center).
  - Provide instruction and facilitate ample opportunities for children to practice self-care skills as independently as they are able (e.g., verbally or nonverbally asking for help, feeding themselves, dressing, washing hands, toileting, and locating personal items).
  - Maintain environments that support self-care and hygiene (child-size sink, toilet, coat rack, toothbrushes, etc.).
  - Encourage children to show independence in self-care practices. Provide time, support, and equipment as needed.
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## Safety Awareness

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*Safety awareness refers to development of the ability to identify potential risks and use safe practices to protect oneself and others.*

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### Widely Held Expectations

#### Children begin to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of personal safety.
  - Develop awareness of and the ability to follow basic health and safety rules (e.g., fire and traffic safety).
  - Trust and cooperate in a comfortable, safe environment.
  - Recognize and avoid potentially harmful persons, objects, substances, activities, and environments.
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### Strategies for Early Educators

- Provide a safe, healthy, supportive environment with appropriate supervision.
  - Teach safety rules and model safe practices (e.g., bus safety, playground safety, staying with the group, safe use of classroom materials, and knowing personal identification information).
  - Teach and model appropriate responses to potentially dangerous situations, including fire, violent weather, and strangers or other individuals who may cause harm.
  - Provide and monitor appropriate media content. Eliminate access to violent and inappropriate programming, video games, and movies.
  - Report all suspected child abuse or neglect.
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### Strategies for Families

- Provide a safe, healthy, supportive environment for your children, with appropriate supervision.
  - Talk about safe practices and model them yourself, such as looking both ways before crossing streets and wearing a helmet when bicycling. Use seatbelts and child-restraint seats. Make sure children know their full name and other personal identification information.
  - Discuss with your child appropriate responses to potentially dangerous situations, such as inappropriate touching. Teach them fire safety rules and how to use 911 to summon help.
  - Monitor what your child sees on television and at the movie theater and eliminate access to violent and inappropriate shows, video games, and films.
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## Motor Skills

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*Fine motor refers to movement of the small muscles of the hand and arm that control the ability to scribble, write, draw, tie shoes, use a keyboard, and many other activities requiring finger, hand, and hand-eye coordination.*

*Gross motor refers to movement of the large muscles in the upper and lower body that control the ability to walk, run, dance, jump, and other skills relating to body strength and stamina.*

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### Widely Held Expectations

#### Children begin to:

- Develop small muscle control and coordination.
- Experiment with handheld tools that develop strength, control, and dexterity of small muscles (e.g., spoons, paintbrushes, crayons, markers, safety scissors, and a variety of technological tools, with adaptations as needed).
- Explore and engage in activities that enhance hand-eye coordination, such as using eating utensils, dressing themselves, building with blocks, creating with clay or play dough, putting puzzles together, stringing beads, and using other manipulatives.
- Develop body strength, balance, flexibility, and stamina.
- Develop large muscle control and coordinate movements in their upper and/or lower body.
- Explore a variety of equipment and activities that enhance gross motor development (e.g., balls, slides, locomotive toys, and assistive technology).
- Increase the ability to move their bodies in space (running, jumping, skipping).

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### Strategies for Early Educators

- Provide daily opportunities and a variety of activities for children to use handheld tools and objects.
- Model the use of drawing and writing tools in daily activities.
- Plan activities that use a variety of materials to support fine motor skill development, with adaptations as needed (paper, pencils, crayons, safety scissors, play dough, manipulatives, blocks, etc.).
- Provide child-size tables and chairs.
- Supervise and encourage appropriate use of materials to foster greater success and enjoyment.
- Encourage children to take part in active play every day, such as climbing, running, hopping, rhythmic movement, dance, and movement to music and games.

- Supervise and participate in daily outdoor play. Provide adequate space and age-appropriate equipment and materials, with adaptations as needed.
- Plan daily physical activities that are vigorous as well as developmentally and individually appropriate.

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### Strategies for Families

- Provide your child with a variety of tools and objects that small hands can hold, manipulate and use – such as silverware, toothbrush, comb, or hairbrush.
- Show your child how you use drawing and writing tools in your daily activities (for example, creating a grocery list, jotting down a telephone number, addressing an envelope, or using the computer to write a letter).
- Keep a ready supply of simple materials such as paper, pencils, crayons, play dough, and blocks available in a place where your child can work with them for extended periods of time.
- Make physical activity a big part of your child's daily life – running, hopping, dancing, playing games, and moving rhythmically.
- Supervise and take part in frequent periods of outdoor play and forms of exercise that enhance physical fitness.

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## Physical Health and Growth

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*Physical health and growth focuses on dietary habits and nutrition awareness, the development of healthy exercise habits, and attention to other wellness issues.*

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### Widely Held Expectations

#### Children begin to:

- Participate in a variety of physical activities for longer periods of time (e.g., exercise, games, and active play).
- Transition from high-energy to low-energy activities (e.g., calming or other relaxing activities).
- Recognize and eat nutritious foods.
- Develop an awareness of personal health and fitness.
- Participate in games, outdoor play, and other forms of exercise to enhance physical fitness.
- Engage in adaptive physical activities as appropriate.
- Make better use of their vision and hearing, and benefit from correction and aids as needed.

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### Strategies for Early Educators

- Provide time for frequent exercise and active play by limiting the use of television and videos in the classroom.

- Encourage and support children's need for rest and relaxation by scheduling both active and quiet times.
- Model and discuss healthy eating habits and provide nutritious snacks and meals.
- Talk with families about health concerns that may be affecting a child's development (e.g., growth, hearing, vision, and appropriate clothing for weather conditions).
- Help families identify and use local health, medical, and dental resources for routine checkups and treatment of illness.
- Increase opportunities, supervise and actively participate in children's outdoor play.
- Play visual and auditory discrimination games such as "I spy" and take listening walks.

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### **Strategies for Families**

- Encourage exercise and active play and limit the time your child spends watching television, playing video games, and using the computer.
- Establish routines for bedtime and quiet time.
- Set an example with healthy eating habits and make sure your child has adequate nutrition.
- Identify and use local health, medical, and dental resources for routine medical and dental checkups and treatment of illness.
- Make sure children are properly dressed for weather conditions and activities.
- Increase outdoor play and provide appropriate supervision.